



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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July 9, 2003

TO: State Board of Health Members
FROM: Doreen Garcia, Staff
RE: NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE BOARDS OF HEALTH

Background and Summary

In 2001, the Board sought to place its work in a national context by better understanding the roles state boards of health play in other states. We found that current information about state boards across the nation did not exist. Board staff conducted their own nationwide survey to assess the number and types of state boards of health. They considered national and state performance standards under development and how they might apply to state boards of health. They also reviewed the draft of a model public health act was reviewed to consider how it addressed the role of a state boards. Working with me on this study was intern Kimberly Moore, and Craig McLaughlin, the Board's Senior Health Policy Manager.

We identified state boards of health or councils meeting the study criteria in 30 states. Of these, 22 (73%) make policy and provide advice. Eight (27%) are advisory only. Of the 22 boards with policy-making authority, eight (36%) oversee or direct the state health agency. There was a net loss of two qualifying state boards and councils nationwide between 1991 and June 30, 2003. If one considers the powers and duties of state boards of health as a continuum—with boards that have direct oversight of the statewide public health system on one end and boards that are strictly advisory to the executive officer of the state health agency on the other—WSBOH appears to fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

Today I will provide an overview of this study. Your packets contain a current draft of the full report, including a one-page executive summary. I am asking for your review and comment, and anticipate completing the report and bringing it back to the Board for formal adoption by September. Because several individuals and organizations are anxious to see the results of this study, I ask that you approve distributing the draft report and executive summary for public review and comment. I also suggest that the Board direct staff to work with state and national organizations to support their efforts to strengthen the performance of state boards of health.

Recommended Board Action

I recommend the Board consider the following motion:

The Board authorizes staff to distribute the report, Washington State Board of Health Nationwide Survey of State Boards of Health, as a draft for review and comment. The Board directs staff to work with state and national organizations as other projects allow to assist with their efforts to strengthen the performance of state boards of health.